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49. Phraseme in standardsprachlichen Varietäten des Deutschen / Phraseological expressions in German standard varieties

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1. Pluricentricity and phraseology

It is well known that the German nonstandard language varies regionally to a great extent (for regional variation of dialectal phraseological expressions see Piirainen, ch. XII. 47., and Zürrer, ch. XII. 48., this volume). However, the (formal) standard language, too, shows regional and national variation as to lexis, semantics, pronunciation, orthography, syntax and pragmatics. German is used as a solo- or co-official language in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg and Liechtenstein and has official status in regions of Belgium and Italy. For instance, administration, laws, and institutions are sources of technical terms and linguistic norms for their respective nations. Moreover, the standard language used in the media is distinctly pluricentric (cf. Bickel 2001). Regional and national differences of standard German have been acknowledged for quite a while as far as single lexemes are concerned. This type of variation has been referred to as *plurizentrisch* ('pluricentric'), *plurinational* or *pluriareal* ('pluriregional'), depending on the specific perspectives of the writers.

Among the linguistic forms that differ nationally and regionally, there are a considerable number of phraseological units. It is assumed that between half and two thirds of all standard German phraseological expressions are used in the whole of the German speaking area (Korhonen 1992 a, Burger 1995 and 1998, Häcki Buhofer 1998). The remaining phraseological units show national/regional differences as regards form, lexis or semantics.

Widely held though this opinion is, there has not been much empirical evidence for this judgment up until recently (see § 3.1., this article). Firstly, this might be due to the lack of empirically feasible methodologies before the introduction of corpus linguistics in phraseology. Secondly, it might go back to the polylexical structure of phraseological expressions, which increases the potential of variation exponentially. Thirdly, it might reflect the still widely spread view on the core of standard German as most distinctly corresponding to the northern German variety. In this view, any variation is erroneously seen as dialectal variation.

For instance, let us consider the phraseological expression *das kannst du in die Esse/in den Schlot/Kamin/Rauchfang/Schornstein schreiben* (literally “you can write this into the chimney [and nobody will be able to read it because the fire will wipe it out immediately]”, i.e. ‘you will have to kiss that goodbye’). There are well substantiated national/regional German standard variants for ‘chimney’: *Esse* is most frequently used in middle east Germany, *Schlot* in middle east/south east Germany, *Kamin* in western Austria, Switzerland and south/middle west Germany, *Rauchfang* in middle and east Austria and *Schornstein* in northern middle Germany (see Ammon et al. forthcoming). Accordingly, the variants of the phraseological expression *das kannst du in die Esse/in den Schlot/Kamin/Rauchfang/Schornstein schreiben* are more frequent in the areas where the variable constituents *Esse*, *Schlot*, *Kamin* etc. prevail – even though the regional attribution of one constituent of the idiomatic expression does not always guarantee the same regional attribution for the whole expression (Piirainen 2002); thus, the expression *das geht weg wie warme Semmeln* (literally “it sells like warm bread rolls”, i.e. ‘it sells very well’) is much more widely spread than the constituent *Semmel*, which is a variant mainly restricted to Austria and northeast/southeast Germany (Piirainen 2002 a, 38).

To accept regional and national variants as standard variants, which are unmarked in terms of style and register, presupposes the concept of the pluricentricity of standard languages (Clyne 1992, 1993, Ammon 1995; also see Aijmer ch. XII. 50., this volume for phraseological expressions in varieties of English). Swiss variants are commonly called *Helveticisms*, Austrian variants *Austriacisms* and German German variants *Teutonisms* (for a discussion of the controversial term *Teutonism* see Polenz 1996).

In contrast to the older, monocentric view, which assumes that the normative core of a standard language can be geographically localized (e.g. northern Germany for the German standard language) and which tends to consider speakers outside this core area (e.g. speakers of the southern areas)

to use varieties which are peripheral and slightly deviant from the “actual” standard, the pluricentric view proceeds from various so-called *centres* of equal normative status; apart from areas where German is spoken as a minority language, these centres of German varieties roughly correspond with nations or parts of nations where German is used as an official language (Ammon 1995, Burger 1998, 193). The linguistic differences originate in historical and political processes of these political entities and different language contact situations, by which for instance the frequent occurrences of Gallicisms in Swiss standard can be explained, e.g. *à fonds perdu* ([‘investment] without repayment’), *à jour* (‘up to date’), or Slavicisms in Austrian standard, e.g. *etw./jmd. ist jmd. Powidl* (literally “sth. is plum purée to sb.”, i.e. ‘somebody couldn’t care less about someone/something’), *auf Lepschi gehen* (‘go out/hang around [and have fun]’), *in alles seinen Kren reiben* (literally “to rub one’s horseradish into everything”, i.e. ‘to have to have one’s say’). For further examples of loan words and loan phraseology in German varieties see Burger 1998, 201, Ammon et al. forthcoming, and Ammon 1995, 178 f; 281 f; 356 f. Also see Burger 1998, 201 on loan-phraseology resulting from international contacts in Austria and Switzerland.

The pluricentric view of standard languages disregards the imbalance in the number of speakers in the individual centres and supports the equal recording, description and analysis of lexemes irrespective of the asymmetry in the relationship between the communities. In this view, the phraseological variants *das kannst du in die Esse/in den Schlot/Kamin/Rauchfang/schreiben* are *not* seen as dialectal variants of *das kannst du in den Schornstein schreiben*, but they are all considered to be of the same standard level – provided they occur frequently enough in the written or formally spoken language. For the problem of the differentiation between dialect and standard see chs. XII. 47. and 48. this volume, Burger 1998, 203 f, Burger 2000, 39, Eismann 1991, Piirainen 2002 a, 38 f, Ebner 1988. It can be argued that even dialect words recognizable/ identifiable by their morphology can be considered standard as long as they are frequent enough in written language and thus have risen to the standard level, e.g. the Swiss phraseological expression *wissen, wo Bartli den Most holt* (literally “to know where Bartholomew gets his cider from”, i.e. ‘to know every trick in the book’). (*Bartli* ends in a dialect diminutive). Burger (1998, 203), however, doubts whether dialectal phraseological expressions ought to be accepted as standard language simply due to their occurrence in written texts.

The concept of pluricentricity has often been criticised for its alleged overemphasis on national linguistic variation (e.g. Besch 1990, Koller 1999). However, in the linguistic awareness of the speakers, the status of national variants plays an important role for national, linguistic and social identification and is hence not to be underestimated (see Hofer 2003, 479). This also applies to variants of phraseological expressions. A number of them are used for special stylistic purposes in media language (Burger 1998, 206 ff), e.g. for references to matters typical of the country or the reflection of spoken language in written texts. Moreover, the category of regional variation is not merely to be replaced by the category of national variation; rather the national and regional levels of variation are intended to complement each other for an adequate description of the variation of written and spoken language (Hofer 2003, 479, also see Piirainen 2002 b, 2003, 119, who emphasizes that especially in respect to phraseological expressions, Germany is not to be considered as a uniform centre; she opts for a more regional view of phraseological variation). For further discussions and controversies about German pluricentricity see Besch 1990, Kloss 1978, Koller 1999, Muhr 1993, Polenz 1999, Schmidlin 2003.

2. Research to date into phraseological expressions varying on a national/regional basis

General dictionaries as well as phraseological dictionaries have shown surprisingly little awareness of the diatopic variation of phraseological expressions roughly until the 1970s, despite the existing general interest in the diatopic variation of standard German (e.g. Kretschmer 1918, Eichhoff 1977, who focussed on single lexemes rather than phraseological expressions (discussed in Piirainen 2003, 117 f)). For instance, many expressions used as examples in the rich Leipzig tradition of phraseological research and phraseography (e.g. Binowitsch/Grischin 1975) are regionally limited, but lexicographically unmarked due to the authors' lack of awareness of the regional restriction of the phraseological expressions concerned, such as *etwas in die Esse schreiben* (mentioned in § 1., this article), or *Fettlebe machen* ('live luxuriously/sumptuously'), which, by the way, is nonspecifically marked as 'regional' in DUW. As noted by Piirainen (2003, 118), phraseological expressions like these, which were published in Leipzig research contributions and spread out to German studies abroad and teaching material for German as a foreign language, are still often wrongly pre-

sumed to be used in the whole German speaking area (see Piirainen 2003 a, 205, see § 3.2., this article). Furthermore, diatopic markings in the most widely used dictionaries such as DUW and Wahrig are often mainly based on lexicographic tradition and intuition rather than empirical research (see Bickel/Hofer 2003 for a general criticism of Swiss markings in the latest edition of GWDS). In several pilot studies comparing dictionary markings with the actual familiarity and use of phraseological expressions, Piirainen (2002, 2002 a) shows that the diatopic markings in current monolingual dictionaries are often doubtful. The earliest empirical contribution to research into the diatopic variation of German phraseological expressions was published in the 1970s (Grober-Glück 1974) and was based on data collected in the 1930s (Piirainen 2003, 118). However, Grober-Glück 1974 focussed on a selection of thematically restricted phraseological expressions. Her study was dedicated to ethnological/ anthropological rather than linguistic research questions. However, since then, research in national and regional variation of phraseological expressions in standard German has increased and diversified. In the following sections, (partially overlapping) aspects of recent studies are presented in more detail.

2.1. “Thesauric” research into the national/regional variation of phraseological expressions: collections of peculiarities

Nationally and regionally varying phraseological units have been systematically contrastively studied (see Földes 1992 for Austrian variants). In studies like these, the “peripheral” variants (e.g. Austrian, Bavarian or Swiss variants) have been compared with “Binnendeutsch” (i.e. what was taken for Common German and thus thought of as being used in the whole German speaking area), thus proceeding from a monocentric rather than a pluricentric concept of the German standard language (see § 1., this article). (Please note that throughout this article, *Common German* is used with the meaning ‘used in the whole German speaking area’.) It is within this tradition that one can view Ebner 1998 [1969] (“Wie sagt man in Österreich?”, ‘How do you say in Austria (i.e. in Austrian standard German)’), as well as Meyer 1989 (new edition planned in 2004) (“Wie sagt man in der Schweiz”, ‘How do you say in Switzerland (i.e. in Swiss standard German)’), both of whom have collected phraseological expressions varying on a national and regional basis, among thousands of national and regional single lexemes. Ebner 1998 lists about 500 Austriacisms, e.g. *jmdm. das*

Kraut ausschütten (literally “to pour out somebody’s cabbage”, i.e. ‘to have had it as far as somebody is concerned’), *auf der Marodenliste stehen* (literally “to be on the list of the sick”, i.e. ‘not to be fit [to compete]’). Meyer 1989 lists about 200 Helveticisms, e.g. *mit abgesägten Hosen dastehen* (literally “to find oneself with one’s trousers sawn off”, i.e. ‘to show oneself up/ to be caught with one’s pants down’), *das schleckt keine Geiss weg* (literally “no goat will lick it away”, i.e. ‘nobody will deny it, nobody can change it’). For earlier collections of Helveticisms and Austriacisms see Kaiser 1969-70, Rizzo-Baur 1962 and Valta 1974. Numerous examples, especially for Austriacisms and Helvetisms, can also be found in Földes 1992, 1996, Ammon 1995 and Burger 1998, 194.

The relationship between a dictionary entry and its verifiability in texts is one of the main problems in lexicography. It is difficult to empirically account for the frequency of occurrence of phraseological units (see § 3.1., this article). Furthermore, and related to this, historicity is another weak point in existing collections (Burger 1995, 14). A few of the phraseological units listed in Meyer 1989 have probably become obsolete meanwhile. In particular, contrastive studies in phraseology are based on the lexicographic tradition of *types* independently of their verifiability as *tokens*. The fact that the entries and diatopic markings are not always reliable is not only due to the lack of solid quantitative empirical research; Teutonisms (i.e. German German variants) are unmarked (apart from some expressions labelled “*norddeutsch*” (‘North German’)) in phraseological collections as well as current monolingual dictionaries. Phraseological units like *(aller)erste Sahne sein* (‘to be top notch’) (marked as colloquial in DUW/ GWDS), or *bei jemandem Schlag haben* (‘stand a chance with somebody’) go regionally unmarked (or regionally, but nonspecifically marked) in DUW/ GWDS. However, they can hardly be attested empirically in Austria and in Switzerland and can therefore be considered as Teutonisms (German German variants). Ammon et al. (forthcoming), which in one volume represents the regional and national variants not only of Austria and Switzerland, but of all centres of the German standard language (including Germany and its regions), and bases its entries on a large new database and analyses of frequency (Bickel 2000), lists about 900 national and regional variants of phraseological expressions of standard German, many of which had not been codified up to the time of writing. As the latest empirical implementation of the theoretical linguistic concept of the pluricentricity of the German standard language, Ammon et al. (forthcoming) marks the transition from

collections of peculiarities of so-called peripheral varieties to pluricentric lexicography.

2.2. Systematic typologies of the national/regional variation of phraseological expressions

In the following sections, four approaches are presented for classifying national and regional phraseological variants. The classifications have been used for different purposes. Typologies of cross-linguistic/variety-specific equivalence (2.2.1.) and typologies according to linguistic level (2.2.2.) are useful for contrastive studies and basic lexicographic research. The syntactic function of the variants (2.2.3.) is a relevant issue in basic phraseological research and is also helpful for applied lexicographic problems, e.g. the choice of lemmata for the dictionary entry (see ch. XVII. 75., this volume). The communicative function and pragmatics of phraseological variants (2.2.4.) is especially important for learners; Dobrovol'skij (2002, 446) points out that systematic typologies are of little use for learners of phraseological expressions as long as the functional equivalence is not taken into account. The reader of the contrastive study or user of the phraseological dictionary can only make use of the information given on the equivalence of two phraseological expressions if the L2 translations (in the case of varieties: V2 translations) go back to a similar functional domain and level of register – provided this similarity in L1 and L2 exists at all.

2.2.1. *Typology according to the equivalence of phraseological expressions of one variety to phraseological expressions of other varieties*

Burger (1998, 196 f) estimates that (a) for about half of the phraseological expressions typical of Swiss standard (i.e. phraseological Helveticisms), there are corresponding expressions in Common German, e.g. *den Anschein machen* (Swiss standard, see Burger 1998, 197, also see the entry *Anschein* in Ammon et al. forthcoming) vs. *den Anschein haben* (Common German) (i.e. 'to appear/ give the impression of'); Burger (1998, 196) estimates the same degree of relationship between phraseological expressions typical of Austrian standard (i.e. phraseological Austriacisms) and Common German expressions. Numerous examples of this type are listed in Ammon et al. (forthcoming), e.g. *etw. geht jemanden einen Schmarren an* (Austrian,

southeast German) vs. *etw. geht jmdn. einen [feuchten] Dreck an* (Common Standard), i.e. ‘sth. is none of one’s damned business’; *sich (selber) an der Nase nehmen* (Austria and Switzerland) vs. *sich an die (eigene) Nase fassen* (Germany), literally “to take/touch one’s own nose”, i.e. ‘to take a good look at oneself (instead of criticizing others)’, where the variants can be grouped around the same core word (Burger 1983, 37; 62, Hofer/ Schmidlin 2003). Burger (1998, 197) calls differences of this first type “regular differences”, which are not phraseological in nature, but which have to do with the pluricentric differences of the constituents of the expression. The other half (b) can be seen as “independent” phraseology, which is culturally/ historically/ anthropologically the more interesting part (Burger 1998, 197-201); phraseological expressions of this category have no corresponding expressions in Common German and often respond to genuine geography, history, civilization, typical institutions, politics of the individual centres, e.g. the Austriacism *wenns Graz kost’t* (literally “even if it costs Graz”, i.e. ‘at any price’, probably following an utterance of the Emperor Ferdinand II in the context of the counter-reformation: “I mach euch katholisch und wenns Graz kost’t” (‘I’ll make you catholic even if it costs Graz’; see Burger 1998, 198, Földes 1996, 50), or the Helveticism *das Fuder überladen*, literally “to overcharge the cartload” (‘to want too much at once’) (Schmidlin 2003 a). Category (b) includes the group of “faux amis”, where formally identical phraseological expressions have different meanings, which could be especially relevant for teaching German as a foreign language as well as teaching literacy at primary schools, e.g. the Helveticism *jmdm. die Stange halten* (literally “to hold the bar for sb.”, which in Swiss standard means ‘to stand up against sb./ to be a match for sb.’, whereas the meaning ‘stick up for sb.’ is Common German; see Burger 1998, 200, Meyer 1989, Ammon et al. forthcoming).

Burger’s (1998, 197) category of phraseological expressions that are semantically equivalent but that have “regular” formal/lexical diatopic differences (see category (a) mentioned above) is divided into further subcategories by Schmidlin 2003 a and Hofer/Schmidlin 2003. One group of phraseological units have different, though semantically roughly equivalent, components, e.g. *jemandem ins Gäu kommen* (Austrian, southern German) vs. *jemandem ins Gehege kommen* (Common Standard) (‘to encroach on somebody’s territory’). Another group of phraseological units have different constituents which are semantically unrelated, e.g. *keinen Schimmer haben* (Common Standard) vs. *keinen Tau haben* (Austrian) (literally ‘to have no glimmer/dew’, i.e. ‘to have no clue’), or *weder Fisch noch Vogel*

sein (Swiss) vs. *weder Fisch noch Fleisch sein* (Austrian/ German) (literally „to be neither fish nor bird/meat“, i.e. ‘to be neither fish nor fowl’). Finally, there are variants with a similar structure and different lexical fillings of the central slots, e.g. *Hans was Heiri* (Swiss standard, literally “as much John as Henry”) vs. *Jacke wie Hose* (German standard, literally “as much jacket as trousers”), i.e. ‘much of a muchness’. In this last category it becomes evident that the dividing line between independent and equivalent phraseological units is often blurred.

2.2.2. *Typology according to linguistic level*

National and regional variance can imply variance at several linguistic levels: (a) lexical variance, i.e. expressions have roughly the same or a similar meaning but differ in one constituent, e.g. *keinen Schimmer haben* (Common Standard) vs. *keinen Tau haben* (Austrian) (mentioned in § 2.2.1. above); (b) formal variance, i.e. expressions vary in orthography, morphology, or pronunciation, e.g. *von Kindsbeinen an* (Swiss standard) vs. *von Kindesbeinen an* (Austrian and German standard), literally “from children’s legs on”, i.e. ‘from the cradle on’ (Hofer/Schmidlin 2003); (c) semantic variance, i.e. the same expression has different meanings, e.g. *jmdm. die Stange halten* (mentioned in § 2.2.1. above); (d) register variance/ pragmatic variance, i.e. pragmatic variants have a nationally restricted distribution (see Földes 1992 for Austriacisms, for further examples see § 2.2.4. below). The most frequent level of difference in phraseological variants is the lexical level (a) (Burger 1998, 196).

2.2.3. *Typology according to the syntactic function of phraseological expressions*

Burger (1998, 195) established a syntactic classification of regional phraseological differences: verbal, nominal, adverbial, prepositional, adjectival, propositional, and routine formulae. Half of the phraseological expressions of his corpus (partially based on Meyer 1989) are verbal, 23% nominal and 17% adverbial. The dominance of the verbal type corresponds to the distribution of phraseological classes for the whole of the German phraseological corpus established so far. Another syntactically based typology is Schmidlin (2003 a): (a) propositional phraseological expres-

sions/interjections (*satzwertig*) (partially elliptical), e.g. *da beisst die Maus keinen Faden ab* (German German, literally “the mouse doesn’t bite a thread off”, i.e. ‘there is no doubt about it’), or *Schluss mit lustig* (Germany except south east, literally “funny is over”, i.e. ‘that’ll do’); (b) phraseological expressions forming a constituent with two free syntactic positions (*satzgliedwertig*) (subject and object position), e.g. *jmdn. auf dem Kieker haben* (Germany except middle east and south east, literally “to keep watch on sb. with a telescope”, i.e. ‘to have it in for sb.’); (c) phraseological expressions forming a constituent part with one free syntactic position (mostly subject position), e.g. *die Hände verwerfen* (Switzerland, literally “to throw up one’s hands”, i.e. ‘wave sth. aside/ turn sth. down’); (d) adverbial phraseological expressions, e.g. *frei (nach) Schnauze* (Germany, literally “freely according to one’s snout/mouth”, i.e. ‘as the mood takes one/ as one sees fit’); (e) phraseological expressions as predicative complements, e.g. *erste Sahne* (Germany except south east, literally “first cream of all”, i.e. ‘top notch’), *fix und alle* (north east/ middle Germany, ‘completely shattered’). For further examples see Schmidlin 2003 a.

2.2.4. Typology according to idiomaticity, fixity, communicative function and pragmatics

Many phraseologists have agreed upon a continuum between a strict, narrow, formal-structural view on phraseological expressions and a wider view in which not all of the phraseological criteria (idiomaticity, fixity, irregularity) have to be fulfilled (Burger 2002, 393, 400; Stein 1995, Beckmann/König 2002, Fleischer 1997, 58, Elspaß 1998, 35-44). The wider view includes pragmatic, sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic aspects. In respect to nationally and regionally varying phraseological expressions, the group of phraseological expressions with a low degree of idiomaticity is of particular interest, e.g. the speech act *die Sitzung ist eröffnet* (‘the meeting is declared open’), or *sind Sie noch da?* (Swiss standard for ‘are you still there?’ after the interruption of a telephone call). Often part of everyday routine, they attract the attention of speakers of other varieties as well as L2 learners particularly frequently (for further examples see Ammon 1995, 55; 176; 280; Elspaß 1998, 87 ff). Burger (2002, 397) categorizes pragmatic phraseological expressions as follows: greeting formulae, addressing people, and discursive phraseological expressions. Weakly or even non-idiomatic fixed expressions can be labelled *usuelle Wortverbindungen* (‘usual/frequent

word combinations', i.e. collocations) (see Steyer 2000), denoting combinations resulting from words that occur in connection with a certain other word/ certain other words with a higher probability than is the case with occasional word combinations. Often, expressions of this type of fixity are associated with certain text genres, e.g. *gegen Vorweis* (Swiss institutional expression for 'when producing [one's identity card etc.]'), *an ruhiger Lage* ('in a quiet area', often found in advertisements, see § 2.4. below). For non-idiomatic collocations in the GDR variety see Wolf 2000, XVIII.

2.3. National/regional variation of phraseological expressions from the speakers' perspective

This area of research comprises the individual comprehension of phraseological units, their usage, the judgement of phraseological units (by informants) as to their meaning as well as stylistic and regional validity. Concluding from studies such as Häcki Buhofer/ Burger 1994, Häcki Buhofer 1996; 1998, and Grzybek/ Chlosta/ Roos 1994, the mental phraseological lexicon, independently of the regional origin of the informants, varies considerably among speakers, especially as far as phraseological units are concerned which are marked as colloquial in current dictionaries. For quantitative variability (quantitative referring to the number of constituents, e.g. *einen Affen (sitzen) haben*, literally "to have a monkey (sitting) on one", i.e. 'to be drunk/plastered') see Korhonen 1992; on unpredictable individual use and native speaker knowledge see Cowie 2003 and Elspaß 2002. However, apart from the wide inter-individual variation as to the knowledge and usage of phraseological units, Häcki Buhofer 1998 also shows intergroup variation; there are differences between German and Swiss German students. But it is important to note that the phraseological expressions which are more familiar to the Swiss informants than to the German informants are by no means only Helveticisms (Häcki Buhofer 1998). Burger (1998, 74) claims that there is only little awareness of Helveticisms among Swiss informants. A group of students only recognized 19% of phraseological units as Helveticisms – even though all phraseological expressions used in the questionnaire had been proven as generally well-known in a preliminary study. One could postulate that the inability to spot national/regional variants of one's own nation/region is the best proof that they are well embodied in the respective standard variety. Generally, the intergroup differences in the use and awareness of phraseological expressions and their na-

tional/regional restriction can be explained by the fact that the different sociolinguistic situations of the German varieties (in terms of the functional distribution of the dialect and the social role of its register) become especially evident in phraseological expressions (Burger 1998, 201; 210). For instance, there are different permeabilities on one hand between standard and dialect (greater permeability in Swiss and Austrian standard which leads to the rise of many dialectisms in the respective written standard) and on the other hand between colloquialisms and standard, which is especially evident in German German media language. Burger (1998 a, 77) mentions that Helveticisms and Teutonisms can be used next to each other with particular stylistic functional purposes. At the same time, he observed a certain convergence of phraseological variants in mass media language: for example, *kein Bock* (literally “no goat”, i.e. ‘not feel like [doing] something’) has been considered as typical German German but has been established in the media language of the whole German speaking area (Burger 1998, 202).

2.4. Textual functions of national/regional phraseological variants

In this field of research, the occurrence of nationally specific phraseological units is looked at in their various textual contexts. This comprises their textual function. As far as phraseological Helveticisms are concerned, Burger (2000, 39-42) states that they are especially frequent in local newspapers and tabloids. Especially when dialectal phraseological units are transferred into the written language (Burger 1998 a, 78), they create puns, double-entendres (Burger 2000, 40) and the impression of orality in written language. Nonce translations of dialectal phraseological expressions can be used for dramaturgical reasons to shape a lively dialogue. Furthermore, standardized dialectalisms and Helveticisms can be used to refer to down-to-earth, slightly right wing concepts stemming from a rural context and intensifying the cliché of Swiss farmers, e.g. *in die Hosen steigen*, literally “to climb into one’s trousers”, in allusion to traditional Swiss wrestling, meaning ‘to get ready for hard work/for a fight’ (Burger 1998, 209). This largely applies to the independent phraseology (see category (b) mentioned in § 2.2.1. above, cf. Burger 1998, 206). Furthermore, there are fixed expressions consisting of lexemes that are strongly associated with national institutions. For instance, the expression *Vereinigte Bundesversammlung* (‘federal assembly’, specific to Swiss politics) only exists in Switzerland. The closest German equivalent would be *Bundestag* (i.e. ‘Parliament’). The

lexicon in advertisements is generally influenced by local, regional and national traditions, even in widespread newspapers such as the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* with its international readership. This can be illustrated by two Swiss examples from the field of real estate and housing: *an zentraler Lage* (Swiss standard) ‘close to transport’, and *an ruhiger Lage* ‘in a quiet area’ (Hofer/ Schmidlin 2003). Generally, as far as newspapers are concerned, there are more regionally specific phraseological expressions in reviews, letters to the editor, other commentary sections and headlines than in news and reports (Burger 1998 a). For further examples of communicative formulae in media texts see Burger 1998, 159 f.

3. Current and open research questions

3.1. New empirical research possibilities

The lack of statistics is often noted with regret in studies on phraseology (Burger 1995, 14 on obsolete phraseological expressions, Burger 1998, 193; 211; Ebner 1988, 185; Eismann 1991, 44 f; Braasch 1998, 96 f). There are basically two possible methods of studying the actual use of phraseological units (i.e. their “liveliness”) in quantitative terms. (a) If done by means of questionnaires, the studies rely on the individuals’ judgments of their language use; due to the wide individual variation of the phraseological lexicon, the informants have to be very numerous. (b) In the last decade, the facilities for finding and identifying linguistic structures in a corpus have dramatically improved. Text corpora can be used to calculate and analyse the occurrence of phraseological units. Electronic text archives (i.e. data bases on CD-ROMs) and on-line databases (e.g. newspaper archives and entire texts on the web) can be searched by search engines and thus provide new resources in lexicographic research (see Bickel 2000, Cermak 1997; Cowie 1999; Steyer 2000, Chlosta/ Ostermann 2002, Colson 2003). They enable lexicographers to trace the most recent lexical developments of certain words. Furthermore, by specifying the domain of the search in the world-wide-web (*de* for Germany, *at* for Austria, *ch* for Switzerland), the national and regional (quantitative) specificity can be identified quite precisely (Bickel 2000). However, since fixed expressions not only vary regionally, but are frequently modified when used by speakers in a concrete

situation (Häcki Buhofer 1996 and 1998; Grzybek/ Chlosta/ Roos 1994), the statistical analysis of fixed expressions has to be carried out separately for each form and its syntactic and semantic variation, taking advantage of the search tools provided by engines such as *Google* or *Altavista* and by corpus systems such as COSMAS (CORpus Storage, Maintenance and Access System of the *Institut für deutsche Sprache* in Mannheim), which offers the possibility of looking up collocators in data bases, i.e. words which most frequently co-occur with certain other words.

3.2. Regional subdifferentiation and its lexicographic consequences

Phraseological units can occur as numerous different variants, as shown by Piirainen 2002 with the example *jemand steht da wie die Kuh vorm neuen Tor/vorm Scheunentor / ... wie der Ochs vorm Berg(e)* (literally “to stand in front of the barn door like the cow/to stand in front of the mountain like the ox”, i.e. ‘to be completely baffled’). However, the lexicographic representation of this variation is not adequate. For instance, the Berlin marked phraseological expression *es regnet Schusterjungen* (literally “it is raining shoemakers’ sons”, i.e. ‘it is raining cats and dogs’) is much better known in southern Germany than anywhere else, rather than in the Berlin area itself (although in the form *es regnet Schusterbuben*) (Piirainen 2002). However, the form *es regnet Schusterbuben* does not occur in DUW/ GWDS. This is not the only doubtful regional marking mentioned by Piirainen 2002. The enormous variation in her database might partially be explained by the fact that she did not restrict her data to the written use of phraseological expressions (Piirainen 2003, 127). However, her criticism of the insufficient subdifferentiation in dictionaries remains justified, which she illustrates by the example *für lau* (literally “for not” – lau = Juedisch-deutsch ‘no, not’, i.e. ‘for free’) which in DUW/ GWDS appears to be Common Standard but, based on Piirainen’s empirical research, turns out to be regionally restricted (2003, 119; 123).

Moreover, the former GDR as a centre of the German standard in its own right is still underestimated and lexicographically underrepresented (Piirainen 2003, 124). This area, due to its political seclusion, has readily developed variants, some of which have not been discovered yet and some of which, promoted by the Leipzig phraseological research tradition (see § 2. this article), have been erroneously thought of as Common Standard. According to Piirainen 2003, 205, studies of this period, meant to cover

German phraseological expressions in general, can be indirectly used as a data base of possible GDR-variants. Among many other examples, Piirainen mentions *nicht ganz ausgelebt sein* (literally “to be not properly lined”, i.e. ‘to be crazy’) (Piirainen 2003, 205 and 208-213). On the basis of empirical studies, Piirainen (2003, 216) states a certain convergence of variants within the area of the former GDR (especially spreading out from Thüringen (Thuringia) and Obersachsen (Upper Saxony) into other parts of the former GDR), but not across the former border to the FRG which was a distinct variety border. Naturally, a great number of these variants were related to socialistic contents and the political reality of the former GDR, e.g. *seinen sozialistischen Gang gehen* (literally “to go at its socialist pace”, i.e. ‘to go as usual’); *Zettel falten gehen* (literally “to go and fold scraps of paper”, i.e. (ironically) ‘to go and vote’); *Kollege kommt gleich* (‘colleague won’t be long’, in allusion to waiting for service in GDR restaurants) (Wolf 2000). However, Piirainen (2003, 205, also cf. Wolf 2000) also mentions some “nonspecific” GDR-variants: *beim Urschleim anfangen* (literally “to start from the primeval slime”, i.e. ‘to start from the very beginning’); *nicht aus der Asche kommen* (literally “to be unable to get out of the ashes”, i.e. ‘to be unable to get properly started’). The politically nonspecific phraseological expressions of the variety of the former GDR will probably have a bigger chance of survival and of getting used in the whole German speaking area than the specific ones. For further references on language and language change in the former GDR see Fleischer 1987, Schönfeld/ Schlobinski 1997, Piirainen 2003, 204, Piirainen 2003 a, 218 f.

Lexicographically, the systematic consideration of variants leads to a more complex structure of the entries not only on the macro-level (reference between the entries) but also on the micro-level (inner structure and order of formal and semantic slots within the entries); see ch. XVII. 75. this volume, Hofer/Schmidlin 2003, Kühn 2003, Schmidlin (forthcoming), Hofer 2003, Eismann 1991.

4. Conclusion

The familiarity, use and frequency of phraseological expressions are nationally and regionally highly variable. The national variation of phraseological expressions has only been researched since the variation of standard languages has been acknowledged. The normative tolerance in respect to the variation of standard German increased after WW II (Burger 1998,

210). About half of the national and regional phraseological variants can be traced back to the pluricentric variation of their constituents, the other half consist of independent phraseological expressions with no equivalents in the other varieties and are hence the more interesting ones from an etymological, cultural and historical point of view. The different sociolinguistic situations of the German varieties become especially evident in phraseological expressions (Burger 1998, 210). In contrast to the pluricentric variation of single lexemes, the pluricentric variation of phraseological expressions, due to their polylexical structure, is multiplied (Burger 2000, 35). The quantification and codification of this variation is only possible on the basis of intensive empirical research. The results of these studies can be a solid basis for contrastive studies and teaching material (Cermak 1997, Durco 2001, Dobrovol'skij 2002, 450).

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